Editorial: Sustainability: Place, space and pedagogy in adult learning and education

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The challenge of sustainability: Still a long way to go?

We face enormous and unprecedented ecological and social challenges and clearly need to develop much more sustainable modes of development and living. This is, of course, not a new idea and a policy concern with sustainability can be dated back to at least the *Limits of Growth* report from 1972 for the Club of Rome (Meadows et al., 1972). However, the need to address sustainability in and through policy has taken on greater urgency in recent years and, in 2015, the global community adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015). This call was the result of a growing global alarm at the pace of socio-ecological degeneration, most notably but not solely the climate crisis, as well as the distinct but connected problems of inequality and social injustice – also in terms of who is generating respectively suffering from the impacts of socio-ecological degeneration.

While there is a widely shared agreement that there is 'no time to waste' (Wildemeersch et al., 2023), yet we are still failing badly in addressing social, economic and ecological sustainability. The nine 'earth system boundaries' identified by Rockström et al. (2023; see also Foster, 2017) which ensure the planet is safe – that are sufficient biological diversity, fresh water, land cover as well as a stability in climate, the ozone layer, nutrient cycles and the avoidance of excessive aerosol loading, ocean acidification and chemical pollution – are under enormous pressure. In terms of economic and social sustainability the polarisation of wealth and power has also worsened (Sayer, 2015). If this trend continues unabated, we will, according to Thomas Piketty (2014), the French economic historian, undo any progress in wealth (re)distribution made over the past four

generations in the Global North and further widen the gap between affluent countries and those that are so-called 'less developed' economies. These are matters of existential importance, long understood by scientists and recognised by many policymakers, yet, we appear to be unable to act effectively and imaginatively. What these policies on sustainability make very clear is that this is not only a crisis of the physical environment, but also a crisis of the cultural and social environment, of systems of representation and institutions through which our society understands and responds (or neglects to respond) to these challenges: hence the crisis. The failure to exert political impact and stop further environmental and social degradation is both startling and concerning. It has resulted, according to Adam Greenfield (2024), in a systemic crisis which is only beginning to unfold – which he calls the 'Long Emergency'.

Research in adult learning and education (ALE) on sustainability

Meeting these policy goals and targets and the wider civilisational challenge of creating sustainable societies in the medium term are, thus, the most pressing tasks of all the generations who are living in today's society. It is young people in particular, for example by the Youth for Climate Movement, who are today saying 'welcome to our world', that is, welcome to a world that is heading for catastrophic global warming for many species in many places of the earth. This is necessarily also an issue for adult education, as both researchers and practitioners must consider what has fundamentally changed in the relationship between the older and younger generations or how adult education can never be just about individual growth or fulfillment, but always and above all about (shaping and caring for) a shared world. We can observe how the articulation of the 2015 SDGs was followed by the Incheon declaration in 2015 at the World Education Forum. Accordingly, United Nations' (2015, p. 17) target 4.7 of SDG 4 states: 'By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)'. The commitment to sustainability, understood through the SDGs, has defined the work of key adult education International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) in recent years and has served as an important catalyst to shift sustainability to the top of also adult education's agenda.

However, while questions of social justice and equality have been a constitutive aspect of scholarship on ALE, the research on adult education related to environmental and sustainability issues is not extensive. Relatively little attention has been given to sustainability issues among adult education researchers which has to do, in part, with the fact that over the past two decades, lifelong learning policies have been increasingly defined by the advance of the neoliberal economic agenda. In consequence, research in the broad field of sustainability education often seem to be content with a 'transmissive (shallow)' approach rather than with a 'transformative (deeper)' one (Griswold, 2017, p. 8). In a similar way, Violeta Orlović Lovren and Katarina Popović argue that, both 'sustainability and lifelong learning serve as terms and conceptions that are turned into general slogans' (Orlović Lovren & Popović, 2018, p. 13), critized of being used rather as policy measures towards objectives of enhancing economic competitiveness. They point out that, despite the fact that adult education and sustainability issues appear to be natural allies, 'it is difficult if not impossible, to discuss what the role of adult education is – and whether it is considered an inherent part of the education goals that will lead to sustainability' (2018, p. 2).

There are two noteworthy clusters of existing, somewhat overlapping, ALE scholarship which have tried to address this gap. First of all, there is a body of work, a

great deal of it from Canada, that has linked sustainability to transformative learning. Edmund O'Sullivan (1999; O'Sullivan et al., 2002) was an important figure in initiating this line of research which has been slowly building over the past two decades and is now a well-developed body of work (Finnegan, 2023; Košmerl & Mikulec, 2022). The core proposition here is achieving a greater level of sustainability will require a major shift in cultural assumptions about the relationship between the nature, human and non-human animals (see Lange & O'Neill, 2018; Lange, 2012, 2018a, 2018b). Initially building on Mezirow's (1991) account of perspective transformation as a complex, often difficult, process of modifying and replacing our assumptions this has developed beyond this framing through the exploration of alternative conceptions of epistemology from deep ecology, spiritual traditions, systems thinking, and environmental activism. Here 'the hope for an epochal perspective transformation […] serves as a type of background premise, sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit, in presenting empirical material on a range of subjects' (Finnegan, 2023, p. 125) such as courses on environmental education (e.g. Gal & Gan, 2020; Walsh et al., 2020) sometimes with a place based element (Brooks & Brooks, in press) or changes in consciousness (Moyer & Sinclair, 2020; Williams, 2013) and through environmental activism (Kluttz & Walter, 2018; Kovan & Dirkx, 2003).

The second cluster seeks to connect radical popular education, typically aligned with feminist and/or socialist values, to questions of sustainability (von Kotze & Walters, 2023). As one might expect, in this tradition Freire remains an important point of reference (Clover et al., 2012; Hall, 2009; Foley, 1999; Misiaszek, 2021; Misiaszek & Torres, 2019; Scandrett et al., 2010, etc.)[1]. The key idea here is that mass mobilisation from 'below' is vital for social and ecological sustainability. Although there is a stronger emphasis on time and history than on space and place in this tradition there is nevertheless an interesting spatial dimension which goes beyond a focus on the ordering of hierarchies of power in social space. Freire (1978) is emphatic that a key aspect of popular education is the exploration and celebration of the specificity of local culture. The value of situated knowledge in a given place at a certain conjuncture in tandem with the exploration of the particular way structures of domination and exploitation are experienced, and can be resisted, are constitutive and defining ideas in this tradition (Freire, 1972, 1975, 1978, 1994; Freire & Macedo, 1987). The emphasis is 'digging in' into the knowledge of a given community in order to then move outwards building links between particular communities and wider social movements (see also Horton et al., 1990; Kirkwood & Kirkwood, 1989). In this regard it is worth remembering that there is a direct link between the development of participatory action research (PAR) and radical ALE (Fals-Borda, 1999; Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Hall, 2005; Rappaport, 2020). Many researchers in this tradition connect transformative change and sustainability to the development of a new ecology of knowledges in education and society (Tandon et al., 2016). Probably the most significant development in recent years in terms of this tradition in ALE has been the PIMA network which publishes bulletins and organises events.

In both this transformative and critical view on education, ALE research on sustainability emphasizes the role and impact of educators as being much more than edu-ecological technicians, rather 'participatory contributors' (Lange, 2018a, p. 411), and of the learners themselves as being much more than passive recipients of the sustainability agenda, but 'agents in constructing a different trajectory of societies' (Barrett, 2016, p. 108). The importance of space (often connected to the dynamics of global society) and place (often associated with valuing the local) becomes evident when the emphasis is on enriching 'the principles and values of sustainable development in communities, educational institutions and individuals, striving to change the existing human, social and

environmental relations and power structures' (Košmerl & Mikulec, 2022, p. 175). The efforts already made in adult education practices that educators *and* learners, can become 'responsible constituent *of* the environment, rather than just a distant observer' (Wildemeersch et al., 2023, p. 12; emphasis in original) offers key incentives to overcome instrumental approaches of ESD as a learning technology and outcome production. In addressing these educational challenges in recent years, a number of ALE researchers (such as Brooks, 2019) have turned to feminist thinking on entanglement (Barad, 2007) and relationality across species (Haraway, 2016). As human beings, we are entangled with the other species that make up this world. Being able to respond to the sustainability issues of today is about acting upon and with these entanglements (Haraway, 2016). This means, first of all, in being response-able, one does not escape from the complexity of the world but faces one's entanglement and the trouble that make up our world. Secondly, this also implies that responses cannot be known in advance. It is in the relationship, in intra-action in a particular place and time that response-ability takes place. The same applies for the living beings, they themselves only come into being in these entanglements (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017; Haraway, 2016). It is in this web of relations that all living species exist.

Space, place and sustainability: Challenges and emerging foci for ALE research

Our main aim with this Special Issue, in line with Latour (2018), is to emphasize the importance of rediscovering the earth we live in rather than searching for a new world. This requires far more ingenuity, infinitely more insight and a level of mobilisation and institutional inventiveness than what was required to sending a few cosmonauts to Mars. In an accelerated world driven by the logic of capitalist accumulation and the fantasy of endless growth our experience of space is fragmented and place is experienced as a site of loss, dislocation and nostalgia rather than connection or rediscovery (Lefebvre, 1991). Educators and activists with a global orientation (pursuing sustainability on a planetary scale and as a planetary challenge) often end up feeling overwhelmed, ineffective or hopeless (Greenfield, 2024) and we frequently hear people say things like 'we can't do anything – the problems are too vast, the forces arrayed against sustainability are too strong'.

   We also know social space is racialised, gendered and classed in highly complex ways (Bresnihan & Millner, 2023; Fraser, 2022; Gilroy, 1995; Mbembe, 2019). These make 'reading' and rediscovering space and place pedagogically and politically very demanding. There are no easy or even clear routes towards sustainability of the sort suggested the old slogan 'think globally, act locally' and grasping the layered and dynamic nature of contemporary spatiality requires new concepts and practice (Appardurai, 2013). The precise terms on which we imagine and invite others into the rediscovery of place, and the way we think across the natural and social dimensions of space, are very important. Over the past decade we have witnessed the rapid growth of ethnonationalism and nativism rooted in a defensive, bounded, racialised conception of the nation state and geopolitics (Mudde, 2019; Renton, 2019; Toscano, 2023) alongside the resurgence of ecofascism (Roberts & Moore, 2021; see also Biehl & Staudenmeier, 1995). Ecofascism has a particular conception, or better myth, of how place, culture and ecology are, and should, be linked which seeks out sustainability for the 'pure' and natural against the underserving 'Others'. Given what we already know about the effects of breaking planetary boundaries on migration patterns, security and food production we

should take the likelihood of the threat of ecofascism, based in part on a type of excluding rediscovery of place, very seriously indeed.

For all these reasons we need to think carefully about how ecological and social sustainability are viewed in relation to each other and how this links to place-based learning and adult education. This demands field research, pedagogical experiment and the honing of theoretical tools which allow us to grasp how space is currently produced (Lefebvre, 1991; Löw, 2016), how place is experienced and how this relates to various forms of agency (Scott, 1990) as well as profound and even despair inducing heteronomy. Following Massey (1991, p. 24), we therefore want to ask: 'Is it not possible for a sense of place to be progressive; not self-closing and defensive, but outward-looking?'. What might a progressive reenvisaging of place related to ecology entail? This, we think, entails acknowledging the complexity of the production of space on various levels (Lefebvre, 1991; Löw, 2016) across a global system and how this relates to sustainability in specific places. One can point to large scale collective efforts to rethink place, space and sustainability in the Zapatista communities in Chiapas (Maison, 2023) or in parts of Rojava (Dirik, 2022) but we think due attention also needs to be given to how this plays out in less visible and smaller scale ways.

Accordingly, with this thematic issue, we aimed to put a particular emphasis on bottom-up practices that arise in concrete places. Such practices pose their 'own' issues of sustainability and allow the inhabitants of these places to take care of these concrete places and all living beings that are present in those places (such as a shoreline, a brownfield, a park, etc.). Secondly, a growing number of researchers points at the specific abilities that people (re)acquire in these practices. The responses that emerge in these place-based practices are neither instrumental (with a focus on the question 'how to fix this problem') nor simply emancipatory in the traditional sense (with a focus on the question: Who am I, and who do I need to be(come)?). Instead, they propel humans into an attentive care for the many relationships and dependencies (social, material, spatial) in that place. Education in these place-engaged practices points then to the triple capacity of becoming sensitive to the heterogeneity of human and non-human entanglements, of becoming able to slow down one's habits of orientation and of engaging oneself to formulate propositions about what living in these places need in order to thrive and prosper (Decuypere et al., 2019). This care and attention do not stop only with one's own place but also encourage a broader concern for the world. As Cameron (2003, p. 193) puts it, 'experiencing a deeper relationship with one place opens one up to a deeper affiliation with all places, rather than an exclusive sense of place'.

The articles in the Special Issue

We had an excellent response to the Call for Papers, and the seven selected papers for the Special Issue extend and refine ALE scholarship on sustainability, space and place in richly diverse ways. The authors explore the spatial dimension of sustainability education with adults in terms of ways of being and seeing, social and educational policy, learning theory, curriculum design, pedagogy and place-based methods of learning and deliberation.

The issue opens with Elizabeth A. Lange's 'Composting modernity: Pedagogical practices for emplacing ourselves within the living world' is an essay which draws on several decades of research and thinking about issues of sustainability. The article is above all an invitation to think relationally about we are enmeshed in webs of being. Building upon, and moving beyond, her earlier engagement with transformative learning and critical pedagogy Lange draws on research on ecology and sustainability, most

notably post humanist thinking and indigenous philosophies, to outline a critique of modernist conception of progress, development and place. For Lange, place is 'one of 'deep habitation' which includes ancestors and landscapes over the 'longue durée' which decentres an individualistic and anthropocentric idea of place. This, she argues, is a necessary response to the profound ecological crisis we are in. Central to this is an ethic of reciprocity, care and responsibility and cultural and political effort to decolonise ourselves of modernist assumptions. Lange argues: 'Only by withdrawing our energy from this constellation of separation ideas, both at the individual and collective levels, then breaking down these beliefs, can we begin to repattern ourselves and our communities for a life-giving future' as relational beings. Part of this is to learn to accept chaos and unknowing, to 'stay with the trouble' as Haraway (2016) puts it. Here she turns to the metaphor of composting: of the acceptance of decay, disintegration and the unfolding of time. Lange's essay is a rich, theoretically informed piece which invites a rethinking, perhaps even composting, of the still widespread, and perhaps predominant, assumptions about progress, development and knowledge in ALE Lange integrates this in a short but very suggestive discussion of pedagogy and practice which is rooted in what we might call, pace Gramsci (1994) the 'good sense' of adult education rearticulated within a relational post-humanist account of learning which draws on deep ecology, spirituality and indigenous knowledge.

The second piece is entitled 'Liberalism all the way down? Multilevel discourse analysis of adult education for sustainable development policies' and is written by Tadej Košmerl. Košmerl is interested in the way policy discourses intersect and develop in a multiscalar way. Specifically, he looks at how global and EU policies on sustainable development (SD) and education for sustainable development (ESD) relate to and delimit national policies in Slovenia. Using critical discourse analysis and the work of Andreotti et al. (2016), on liberal, neoliberal and critical discursive orientations and their interfaces in policy, Košmerl offers illuminating maps of contemporary policy making. Working through the global, EU and national policy levels Košmerl discerns a strong critical orientation in global policy and some national policies but an orientation to neoliberal and liberal ideas in EU policy. Košmerl concludes that there is evidence of a:

> significant influence from higher-level policies is evident in the Slovenian ALE SD policies – initially from the global level with the SDGs but even more so from the EU level, which also provides a vital part of the funding for adult education in Slovenia. The overarching AESD directions are, hence, formulated at the global level but are concretised at the national level primarily through the EU's strategic frameworks and financial mechanism.

Further, the EU 'extensively exploits the SDGs to legitimise and promote the neoliberal objectives of its ALE policy' and this orientation has become more noticeable in recent years at a national level in Slovenia . What is especially striking in his conclusions is the tendency in SD and ESD policy to allow some space for the discourse and rhetoric of meaningful change within overall policy logics and institutional structures and logic which makes such change unlikely or even impossible.

The paper 'The climate crisis as an impetus for learning: Approaching environmental education from learners' perspectives' by Maria Stimm and Jörg Dinkelaker shifts the focus from the roles and impacts of educators and facilitators to the individual learner's perspective and to the question, in what ways tackling with the issue of the climate crisis in the broader social context could serve as an impetus for learning. They note the tendency in discussions on sustainability and education to begin with macro accounts of the general social need learning for sustainability and a focus on what *should* be taught as a consequence. Drawing on different strands of learning theory, the authors discuss

three approaches and their explanatory value for recognizing learners as active agents of their learning processes and, thus, for understanding the diverse sources for the genesis of such impetuses. What is especially interesting in this treatment of learning theory is the presentation of established and new ideas from the German context. The way theory 'travels' or not across various contexts is an important question and the article will enrich Anglophone readers understanding of German learning theory. In a second step, the authors present empirical examples that align with usual social contexts for environmental education in its broadest sense of learning pathways and suggest a conceptual distinction: Guides and self-improvement books as a potential impetus for individual learning, social movements as a mode for collective self-pedagogisation, and, finally, the role of institutions and organizations in challenging, more or less decisively, individuals to encounter with the objectives and the learning agenda of the climate crisis. By this, Stimm and Dinkelaker provide an analytical framework for further discussions on the relation between adult learning and the issue of the climate crisis, viewed through the perspective of adult learners and possible avenues into entering a learning activity.

Diana Holmqvist and Filippa Millenberg authored 'Carving space to learn for sustainable futures: A theory-informed adult education approach to teaching'. By this, the authors draw our attention to the unsustainability of social acceleration, drawing on Rosa's (2015) critical theory and art-based pedagogies as a point of departure for discussing the vital role of educators and facilitators in providing approaches for teaching and learning that cultivate 'a sense of embeddedness in place and connection to oneself, others and the natural world'. They say 'we view places not just as physical locations but profound centres of experience that shape our understanding of ourselves. Our identities and possibilities are intertwined with the places we occupy'. This has spatial and temporal dimensions and calls educators and facilitators to slow themselves down, situate themselves in space and place and carve slowly, but deliberatively their work and use such an approach for a teaching design in the context of sustainability and for teaching for sustainable futures. This teaching design – what they call a 'seed package', introduced in this contribution, allows not only 'educators to gauge the complexity of teaching and make deliberate choices', but also offer suggestions of how theory and practice can be approached to 'emancipate students to critical awareness and engaged citizenship'.

In her article, Astrid von Kotze is prompted by the following common wisdom, as articulated by Mol (2021). As we taste, chew, swallow, digest and excrete, food not only transforms the people who ingest it, but how we grow and prepare this food also determines how we as humans can live together here in this world. Astrid von Kotze titled her article 'The gut as teacher: Learning from our bodies'. The article is a plea for a pedagogy that makes people think about what they know in an embodied sense about what and how they eat and how their daily struggle to put enough and healthy food on the table is part of powerful and unsustainable mechanism in this world. As both practitioner and researcher, von Kotze and her colleagues have been involved in various education programmes on nutrition and health with mainly working-class women and have experienced the importance of paying attention to participants' gut feelings when trying to encourage critical reflection and change. In the first part of her paper and also in the concluding sections, von Kotze connects her 'gut pedagogy' with a rich set of thinkers who each in their own way show how the separation of different sources and types of knowledge is an artificial construction that denies the forces of body and life. In contrast, a 'gut pedagogy' encourages a more lived-in and mindful engagement with our bodies in very different ways and shows how gut health is linked to food systems, inequality and environmental issues. In the case presented in this paper von Kotze explores the application of 'gut pedagogy' in a skills-training course for unemployed working-class

people in Cape Town. The program, hosted by The Women's Circle, emphasized cooperative learning, using body metaphors like the gut to highlight social, economic, and political interconnections. Sessions incorporated interactive and reflective exercises, such as 'reading the world' through mind-maps and storytelling, to promote understanding of power dynamics. 'The gut as teacher' demonstrates how our digestive system reflects deeper entanglements between humans, nature, and socio-economic systems. By examining the gut's role in digestion, participants in a course can learn how interconnected bodily systems mirror larger ecological and social structures. This pedagogy is a fascinating synthesis of popular education work – which von Kotze has been engaged in for decades – and feminist ecology.

In her article 'Exploring lost spaces: Integrating place, arts, and adult education' Maja Maksimović makes a plea for collaborative projects between art and science in what she calls 'lost places'. These are places where restorative actions are needed because of the destructive exploitation of resources in these places and where values, such as collectivism and social justice, have to be practiced anew in these places. She asks 'is it possible to cultivate fields of care and take action without an attachment to place'? Maksimović comments on a most fascinating case in the Kolubara Mining Basin, near Belgrade. The integration of a science-artistic research project in this mining area effectively visualises the tension between resource extraction and environmental degradation, while also highlighting the larger socio-political dynamics at play. What this project, unexpectedly, reveals are the many layers of history in place and the imagination that have influenced the land's management in this area. The place has been made and remade physically and imaginatively through time – in this case from Yugoslavia to independent Serbia – and these residues remain. In a walking practice artists, researchers and citizens are able to sense how the materiality of the landscape and its cycles are closely linked to social structures and ideology. Drawing on situationist and feminist ideas the article discusses the value of wandering and play. With her article the author also convincingly shows how ALE research is in need of a place-engaged way of thinking in relation to, for example, 'the insideness of place', 'the epistemic value of a place', 'the ontology of what has been lost' etc. For Maksimović, adult educators and the educational imagination they seek to foster is still overly conditioned by temporal metaphors in for example how they conceptualize emancipation or in the way they strive for radical transformation and better futures. Her article sets the stage for how arts education can embed adult education in places and in doing so, contribute to practices that encourage citizens to face losses and create space for the regeneration of places.

In the contribution on 'Walk-centric deliberations: Connecting space, place, and learning', Rolf Ahlrichs and Peter Ehrström have chosen to discuss teaching and learning methods in higher education as entry point for combining the topics of democracy, social sustainability and adult learning. Arguing from the angle of theoretical work on participatory democracy and the question of what kind of methods promote democratic practices and social sustainability, the authors align with walk-centric methods that combine deliberation and learning, following the understanding that learning is strengthened by in-situ observations of situations and places. As such the article brings us back to possibilities and limits of the existing public sphere. For this, they present three case studies that showcase not only the implementation of walk-centric methods at different higher education study places in Germany, but they also suggest a ladder model of walk-centric and walk-inclusive methods. This contributes to distinguish such approaches in their theoretical elements, but also in their didactical features and practical requirements. However, their common ground points to the relevance of recognizing the public sphere as crucial place and space for negotiating the features of sustainable

communities and democracies by raising voices, revealing concerns and articulating interests of those community members who are often unheard or overlooked.

We have also included an open paper in this Special Issue on 'Studying the legacy of second-chance adult education in Flanders: the regional university and the professionalization of adult educators'. In this paper, Joke Vandenabeele describes how she teaches an adult education course at the University of Leuven (Belgium). Every year, third-year bachelor students participating in this adult education course interview adult educators working within a particular adult education setting, such as integration courses, detention education, second-chance education etc. The analysis in this paper shows how such an study exercise can make the university (again) a place where the daily professional practice of adult educators, i.e. their ambitions and doubts, ambiguities and contradictions, can be fully materialize as collective study material.

In our call to this Special Issue we wrote that an enormous amount of work needs to be done, both empirically and theoretically, if adult education research and adult education practices want to play a significant role in a learning how to re-inhabit the places where people live and work. All this raises important research issues to which this Special Issue has taken an important step. The methodological choices and framing of the topic by the authors in this Special issue is interesting. There are no empiricist, small to medium scale evidence based studies (one of the most common type of research articles in ALE and education journals). There are two theoretical articles, a piece of discourse analysis and four articles which intentionally blur the line between researching and designing educational practices. There is a notable interest in art-based and innovative methods here as well. What this shows is an important strength of ALE research and practices: the understanding that learning-teaching-processes on sustainability with adults necessarily embrace cognitive, content-related, corporal, societal, sensitive and also spiritual dimensions. Accordingly, this puts once more attention to the relevance of supporting participatory and bottom-up-practices of adult education on sustainability issues at concrete places in the world. Seen in this way, an important challenge for ALE practices is less about teaching adults how to establish a new kind of fit in their struggle with their environment but more about designing and curating an encounter that involve humans in an ongoing fine-tuning process with a world populated by many more beings than just humans.

Theoretically, several of the authors in this Special Issue look to post-colonial ideas to rethink place and sustainability and problematizes methodological nationalism. It is pertinent to say that the contributors are based in very different countries, namely Slovenia, Serbia, Finland, Germany, Sweden, Canada and South Africa. To return to the observations made earlier about the existing clusters of ALE research it is worth noting that critical pedagogy and critical theory are prominent in the contributions – Negt, hooks, Freire, Rosa, all feature – but transformative learning is less prominent. Interestingly, none of the articles place Bourdieu and Foucault – who has been so influential scholarship on space and power in the social science and who have been so frequently cited in adult education (Nylander & Fejes, 2019) – centre stage. The authors do not look to social geography or anthropology either. But the influence of a post-structuralist inflected feminism is strong. Connected to this the ethics of care and a holistic embodied notion of learning run as a golden thread through most of the articles. This sets the ground for a more elastic reading of space; not only as social or conceptual but also as material and physical. What this adds to the well-established strands of research in adult education is how humans are not in some sort of leading position towards more sustainable ways of living. Instead the focus of the researcher shifts to a learning process that puts concern for the essential heterogeneity of the more-than-human world at the center and to how

issues on what is human and what is non-human, what is global and what is local, what is situated here and what is situated there, what is near and what is far, what is powerful and what is excluded, fold into the specific spatio-temporal design of adult education practices.

Notes

¹ Freire has also been critiqued for his putatively 'modernist' perspective (Bowers & Apffel-Margin, 2005).

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